Folie a Troix

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Folie a Troix

by muse_apollo

Summary

“You know you’re the third person Jack pulled out of a classroom to do his work for him.” His tone is smooth as he paces slowly along the length of the cell as he spoke, movement reminding Clarice vaguely of a caged animal. “Do you know what happened to the first one?”

Clarice nods. “Miriam Lass, missing for two years, presumed dead until her severed arm turned up. Found shortly after, thanks to you. In that time she was kept in a dark room by the Chesapeake ripper, brainwashed into pointing a finger at the wrong person.”

"And the second?”

“I’m looking at him.”

-or-

Four years after the events of TWOTL, Clarice Starling is tasked to interview Will Graham, the captured husband of notorious serial killer, Hannibal Lecter.

Notes

I've had this idea rattling around in my brain for a long time, and i've never gotten around to actually working on it. The whole thing really started because I couldn't stop thinking about how Clarice and Will would interact so anyway, hope you like it!

Chapter 1

Clarice Starling sits across the desk from Jack Crawford, head of the FBI's behavioral sciences division, a deep line forming between her sculpted brows. She had been called to his office straight from training, and there are still tufts of grass in her hair, despite the fact that she wears it in a tight ponytail pulled back from her face.

"I imagine you're wondering why I asked you here." Crawford looks tired, the skin around his eyes is heavy and his smile seems to take a tremendous amount of effort. "I hope I didn't spook you."

"Took me off guard is all." Clarice replies carefully. "Takes a lot more than that to spook me."

"Good." Jack nods slowly, running a hand over his face. "That's good. A job came up, and I thought of you."

Before she can ask what exactly that entails, or why she had been on his mind at all, Crawford slides a file across the desk. Clarice picks it up carefully, flipping it open. Her eyes skim the pages within and her brow furrows deeply as she flicks her gaze back up to meet Crawford's.

"I'm confused."

"You are familiar with this case, are you not?"

"Of course." She nods. The file Crawford has just handed her is perhaps the most notorious case to pass through the behavioral sciences division in the past two decades. "I'm just not sure why you're showing it to *me* ."

"It needs a fresh eye." Crawford replies shortly. "You're top of your class, you have an extensive background in psychology and criminology…" A pause, as though there's something else he wants to say, but he stops short. Clarice doesn't press him. "There are a lot of holes here, four years worth that we weren't able to piece together. Information that could be vital to an ongoing case."

"Are you saying you want me to interview him?" Clarice can hardly believe the opportunity to get a look inside one such mind.

"He won't talk to any of mine anymore, they all have *history* ."

"That's unsurprising." She nods. "I understand he was never very open, even before…" Before what? What statement could describe the greatest black mark on the history of the Behavioral Sciences Unit?

"No, he was not."

Inside the folder, under the case information she finds a copy of a standard questionnaire. “You want me to make it seem like a profiling exercise, trick him into giving me the information you need?”

“Can you do that?”

She smiles. “I can sure try.”

“Good.” Crawford nods again.

“Agent Crawford?”

“Yes?”

“Anything I should know that’ll help me get to him?”

“If it were any other subject, I’d suggest appealing to his narcissism, but he never was one for vanity.” A small smile. “Compassion is his weakness.”

“A sensitive psychopath?”

“Will Graham isn’t a psychopath.” There's something almost defensive in his tone.

“I’ll do it.” She says finally.

“Great, you can start today.”

“Today?” Her eyebrows shoot up at that.

“Yes. Is that a problem, agent?”

“No, of course not.”

“Good, because I expect that report on my desk by 0900 Sunday morning.” A curt nod. “You’re dismissed.”

*****

It takes Clarice less than two minutes to determine her distaste for Frederick Chilton. He has a smug arrogance about him, behind the scars, and a dull look in his eye that betrays little more than surface intuition. Eye, she notes, because he only has one working one, the other is grey, and clouded, staring eerily into the middle distance.

He also didn’t stand from his desk when she'd entered into the room, reclining lazily, *rudely* , in his chair. “Ah, right on time, Ms. Sterling, was it?”

“Starling.” Clarice replies tightly.

“Yes, my mistake.” A tight smile, it pulls the mottled skin at the corners of his mouth. “And you’re here to see Graham… won’t that be interesting.”

“How is that interesting?”

“Talkative isn’t exactly one of Will Graham’s top descriptors… I’d say he’s more of a nuisance than anything else. In his six months of being here, he’s refused to speak to me in any capacity, his therapy sessions consist primarily of bitter silence, and the occasional insults hurled in my direction.” He shakes his head. “At times, I think he’s almost *worse* than Lecter was, at least Lecter was *polite* .”

“It sounds to me he doesn’t like you much.”

“Will Graham doesn’t like *anyone* . Though he has some sort of personal vendetta against me… thinks I’m his nemesis.”

Clarice finds the statement doubtful, but remains silent. “Crawford said you were going to brief me?”

“Right yes, it’s simple stuff really, should be easy to remember but you’d be surprised the sort of idiots we get around here.” He speaks, she thinks, to hear the sound of his own voice more than to make a point. “He’s kept behind glass instead of bars, so that’s no concern. You can pass him nothing but soft paper, with no staples, paper clips or pins, through the sliding food tray.” He pauses, and for the first time, Clarice sees something past the surface of Dr. Chilton, something almost haunted that lingers behind his gaze. “A word to the wise, Graham carries a very unique form of charisma, he plays the role of the helpless victim very well, he’s convinced more than one person. Myself included in the past. But trust me, he’s far more monster than man.”

“I’ve read his file.”

“There’s a stark difference between reading and knowing, Miss Starling. Some of us have the scars to prove it.” And just like that his tone shifts from whatever darkness had been there back to something more jovial “Now, we really should get you down there. Only so much time left before lights out. I’ll call a guard to lead you to Graham’s cell.”

“Not coming with me?”

“Oh no,” he seems seconds away from laughing at the thought. “I doubt being seen with me would do you any favours.”

It was probably for the best, she admonished, only to herself. She needs Graham to trust her, and she doubts Chilton will be of much use in that regard.

The guard, a burly, dark-skinned woman, gives her the same speech Chilton had, though there's something tense about the way she says it that tells Clarice she might have experience with this particular patient that proved the importance of the rule.

She's surprised when she finds herself led relatively deep into the prison. More surprised still when she finds herself standing in front of a pair of reinforced double doors. “You keep him in a private wing?”

“He revealed a nasty tendency to whisper to the other inmates. Persuaded a few to suicide, a few to violence against the guards. So we moved him.” She leads Clarice in through the double doors, to a large room, divided down the middle by a thick, glass wall.

The man Clarice sees in the cell in front of her is startlingly normal. To look at him, you wouldn’t have known that this man, hunched low in the corner, eyes shut as if deep in thought, curls hanging messily into his eyes, was capable of any of the things he’d done. He lifts his head as the two enter, a pair of watchful blue eyes flicking from the guard to Clarice, and then back to the guard.

“Morning, Barney," his smile is polite. "How’s the missus?”

“She’s fine,” the guard actually smiles. “Should be due any day now.”

“Well, if you’re still looking for names, I’ve heard good things about William.”

“Don’t push it Graham.” But there isn't any bite to the words.

Graham just grins at her, his gaze turning into something more of a frown when it falls on Clarice. “Who are you?”

The guard leaves quietly after that, telling Clarice she could come get her if she needed anything.

Graham’s eyes follow Barney out of the room, then flick back to Clarice, dark and curious. “Well?”

“Oh.” She nods, moved to step closer, then thinks better of it, aborting the movement, clutching her coffee in her hand. “Special Agent Clarice Starling, I’m here to interview you.”

“One of Jack’s I imagine?”

“It was Agent Crawford who sent me to speak with you, yes.”

“Oh dear, that doesn’t sound good.” His smile is disarming but his eyes are wary. “May I see some credentials?”

“Is that really necessary?”

“Humour me.”

She pulls them from her pocket, pressing them to the glass wall between them. The rest of the cells in the hospital had bars, she noted, this cell must have been specially built. Not for Graham, she realized, but for the man who had occupied it before him. He leans close, examining it for a long moment before snorting a laugh as he steps back. “Around and around we go.” He murmurs, seemingly to himself.

“Something funny?” Clarice raises one eyebrow at him.

Graham shakes his head. “You know you’re the third person Jack Crawford has pulled out of a classroom to do his work for him.” His tone is smooth as he paces slowly along the length of the cell as he spoke, movement reminding Clarice vaguely of a caged animal. “Do you know what happened to the first one?”

Clarice nods. “Miriam Lass, missing for two years, presumed dead until her severed arm turned up. Found shortly after, thanks to you. In that time she was kept in a dark room by the Chesapeake ripper, brainwashed into pointing a finger at the wrong person.”

“Our own Frederick Chilton.” His smile turns sour at the name. “Do you know what happened after that?”

“She was institutionalized for a time…”

“And now?”

“Deceased, suicide, six months ago.” Her jaw clenches minutely as she speaks of Lass’ unfortunate fate. “Why are you asking me this?”

“Making sure you know what you’re getting into. What about the second?”

“I’m looking at him.”

“Looking isn’t knowing,” A small grin, disarming. “What do you know about me?”

“They say you were the best, Crawford’s right hand… hell, you even caught the ripper the first time around.”

Graham tenses a little at that. “The *only* time around.”

She cocks her head to one side. “You don’t think they’ll catch him again?”

His lips twitch in a smile. “Not unless he lets them. He turned himself in the first time around, did it to spite me. He’s…. *petty* like that.” There's something almost soft about the way he says it. Reminiscent even.

“Not intentional on your part then?”

“It was and it wasn’t.” His smile widens a bit, the smile of a man keeping a secret. “But we’re talking about me, Ms. Starling. Not my husband.”

The casual way he says the word made her ears ring, but she doesn't let it show in her expression. “Okay, then let’s get back to you. How did you end up here?”

“Well, that’s history, isn’t it.” There's something so loose and clever about his smile, the scar that runs from below his eye to the corner of his mouth should detract from its charm. It doesn't. “You’ve read it, you should know.”

“Reading isn’t knowing.” She echoes his words. “It makes sense up until a point. And then it doesn’t.”

Graham just raises an eyebrow, a gesture for her to continue.

“Something changed… during the Dragon.”

“There you go.”

“You chose Lecter over Crawford. Why?”

“That’s the question on everybody’s mind isn't it? Why did I do it."

“Are you going to answer it?”

“No.” And just like that his expression shifts, moving away from whatever openness had been on his face moments ago. He frowns. “You should have Barney bring you a chair. They have some in the hallway.”

“I’m fine.”

Graham just shrugs. “Suit yourself.” He walks around the desk, grabbing his own chair and pulling it up to the glass. “I know you’re not just here to chat. So is this about Hannibal or Buffalo Bill? I’m not interested in helping either way, but I’d like to believe Jack’s not arrogant enough to think I’d help him arrest my own *husband* .”

There's that word again, no less jarring the second time. “This is about you.”

“Oh?” He raises an eyebrow. “Well then I’m even less interested.”

“It’s part of an ongoing study.” She pulls the survey Crawford had given her out of her bag, two copies, one for her own notes, and one to be filled out by the interviewee. “An attempt to update the terminology if you will.”

“I don’t fit into the boxes.” Graham replies shortly. “I have no interest in taking another survey where they’ll try and stick me in another one that doesn’t match up. Chilton’s been making shit up since I got here… well, longer than that but.” He shrugs. “What was the latest one again? Some kind of long term psychosis brought on by the combination of an empathy disorder and compound trauma?”

“You don’t like the labels, I understand that, but you of all people should know why they’re important.”

He pauses, cocking his head to one side as if considering her for a moment, then he nods once, shortly. “How would you classify Buffalo Bill?”

“That’s not what I’m here to talk about.”

“It almost certainly is, whether or not Jack told you it was.” This isn’t going how she’d planned it to. “How many women was it?”

“Five found so far.”

“All flayed?”

“Partially, yes.”

“The papers never explained the nickname. Do you know why they call him that?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me.”

She straightens just a bit, her chin raising in defiance. “Will you look at this if I tell you?”

A sigh. “I’ll look. Can’t promise more than that.”

She swallows. “It started as a bad joke in Kansas City homicide. It’s because he… skins his humps.”

She's surprised when Graham’s mouth twists just a bit, disgusted. “Tasteless, don’t you think?”

She nods.

“Send it through.” He says finally. Clarice does, placing it in the sliding tray, allowing it to pass fully through as she shut the door. Graham pulls it out, flipping deftly though barely pausing as he skims over the words on the page. “What is this meant to accomplish, exactly?”

“We’re just trying to understand what happened to you.”

He sighs then, running a hand over his face, pushing his hair back revealed a faded white scar across his forehead, mirroring the much rougher one along his cheek. “Nothing happened to me, Special Agent Starling. *I* happened. People don’t seem to get that, when they look at me, they don’t see me first, they see a broken man curled up in the shadow of a monster.”

“Maybe filling out the survey will help them to see you better.”

He does meet her eyes for a moment, and she could swear she sees curiosity there for just a moment. Then he shakes his head. “People only see what they want to see. It makes it easier for them to sleep at night.”

“Not you though. You see more than other people.”

He chuckles, a breathy, hapless thing. “You’ve got a bit of an accent you know that. Not much, you’ve covered it well, but still. You don’t come from much do you?” He doesn’t give her time to answer, merely presses on. “Simple life, farm life, not much prospects for a future for you. No, you’ve fought to get where you are, you’re not here because of any silver spoon, you’re here because you’re good at what you do. I respect that. I think we have a lot in common.” A pause, and a short, tight smile. “I’m still not filling out this survey, it’s pointless and a waste of both of our time, I promise. I *can* give you something better though.”

“What’s that?”

“Advancement. You want to solidify your role in the FBI, and hopefully do some good while you’re at it. I can help you with that.” He stands close to the glass, meets her eyes for only the second time since she’s been speaking to him. “So listen closely, because I’m interested in giving too many tips. You want a lead on Bill? Look in Raspail’s car.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> Hello yes I am back! my hannibal hyperfixation died down for a little while but I just remembered this fic and how much i love the premise i've set up for it so weee here we go!

Chilton sits across the glass from Will, he'd stopped having sessions in open rooms after the first two weeks, when moving Will had proven too difficult. He was far more trouble than moving him was worth. Chilton has one knee crossed over the other, and a notepad on his knee, and watches Will cautiously through the glass.

"Are you going to talk today? Or are we just going to sit here."

"I was thinking about therapy dogs. They might help lift the spirits around here."

Chilton just scoffs at him.

"I'm serious."

"I'm sure you are, but I won't be getting any dogs."

Will shrugs at that. "How's the book coming? Not as well as the first, I imagine?"

"I'm sure audiences would be alarmed to know you're more difficult to reason with than Hannibal Lecter," he shakes his head.

"I want to talk to Jack."

"You never want to talk to Jack."

"Well, I do now."

"What could you possibly want to talk to Jack about?"

Will sits back in his chair, raising one eyebrow in a pointed look. "I don't think that's your business, Frederick."

"You won't talk to me. You'll talk to Jack, you'll talk to the first pretty FBI agent that walks in here, but you won't talk to me." He rubs slowly at one of his temples, looking exhausted. "Some things never change, do they?"

“Well, look at you.” Will smiled tightly. “You’re just as desperate to crawl inside my mind as you were when I first met you. Do you know what your problem is?”

Chilton sighs. “Enlighten me.”

“You’re just not interesting. You never have been,” a pause, and then he repeats himself. “I want to talk to Jack.”

“I’m your therapist, you have to talk to me.”

“I don’t *have* to do anything. I have a right to outside communication.”

“You have a right to contact your lawyer, the rest of your visitation is decided by hospital policy.”

Will sighs. “ *Fine* . How’s this? I will give you one, hour-long session where I answer your questions.”

“An open book?”

“For *one* hour. Just contact Jack Crawford, and arrange a meeting.”

“Fine.” Chilton smiles, looking obnoxiously pleased with himself. “I’ll call him.”

*****

“Hello, Will.”

Will smiles, a tight thing that doesn’t quite reach the corners of his eyes. “Hi, Jack. Been a while.”

“Not long enough.” Jack replies. “What do you want?”

“I’m curious about what it is you think you’re doing.”

“I’m not sure I’m following you.”

“Cut the shit, Jack,” Will snipes back. “History is repeating itself, and you’re the one that’s driving it to happen.” He meets Jack’s gaze then, just for a fraction of a second. “She’s clever. I like her. She reminds me of myself though, you should keep an eye on that.”

“There isn’t another one like you, Will,” his tone is a warning.

Will just laughs. “Of course there is. The only difference between me and Miriam Lass is that I was Hannibal’s type.”

Will notes with satisfaction the small twitch of Jack's jaw at the words. "If I recall, the feeling was mutual."

Will smiles again, a cruel twist of his mouth. "There is that, yeah," a pause, he cocks his head to one side. "You know, I never did properly thank you for introducing me to my husband. I had half a heart to invite you to the wedding, but the situation didn't really allow for it."

"No thanks necessary."

"I'm worried about her, you know."

"About Starling?"

"You haven't told her everything… Either send her after Bill or don't, but lying to her… sending her to write a psychological profile on *me* … you didn't think I'd see through that?"

"Maybe I was hoping you would. You threw her a bone, didn't you?"

"I did do that. She's smart, I think she'll catch him. She's got the makings of a good agent, a better one than me, I imagine." His jaw clenches then, and he mulls over his next words carefully. "Do me a favour though?"

"That I can't promise."

"Don't send her after Hannibal."

"Worried about him?"

"Hannibal can take care of himself. It's not him I'm worried about."

The words hang in the air between them, neither man wanting to speak on what had been suggested.

"So you'll help her?" Jack said finally, when the quiet became too much to bear.

"With Bill?"

"Yes."

"Yes." Will nodded. "But after this, don't ask me for anything else. I can't watch you ruin another one, Jack. You've done enough already."

*****

Clarice sends a report to Crawford promptly, detailing what it is she learned from her visit with Graham, as well as his interest in the Buffalo Bill investigation.

She's not surprised when Jack doesn't respond to her message until Monday, though she is a little irritated. When he does reply, it's clipped. He gives her the go ahead, after a short reminder that when he says not to contact him until Monday, that means to wait until Monday. She accepts the criticism and offers some apology.

Then she gets to work. Finding the car is the first issue, there's a lot of paperwork to go through, a lot of phone calls and tedium, but eventually she finds the location of the car, a storage unit with all of Raspail's old stuff, the money still tied up in the family or something like that.

She gets a hold of the estate manager easily enough, and eventually manages to locate the car in Raspail's old storage unit.

Which brings her to now, standing in the rain, using a car jack to pry up the rusted shut door of the storage locker. She doesn't manage to get it as far as she would have liked, but there's enough space for her to fit underneath. Clarice sighs, pushing a wet strand of hair off her forehead.

"Well," she turns to the estate agent, trying her best to smile. "I'm going in. If I'm not out in ten, yell for me. If I don't respond, call this number, and ask for Jack Crawford. Tell him Starling needs backup." She hands him a card.

The man blinks owlishly at her, but nods. "Yes miss."

Clarice crouches down, shining the flashlight into the gap. The locker is crowded with junk, and she winces as she sees a rat dart behind a shelf. She slides the flashlight under the door, before maneuvering herself appropriately, laying flat on her back, she grips the bottom of the door and slides underneath in a fluid motion.

Once inside, she grabs the flashlight, and straightens, peering around the inside of the unit. There's a lot of junk inside, she notes an empty class cabinet, and next to it, a box simply labelled 'birds'. She resists the urge to open the box and look inside. "Not what you're here for, Starling," she mutters to herself as she walks deeper into the unit.

She feels herself sag with relief when she sees the car, covered in a stained white sheet. Clarice grips one grimy edge between her fingers and pulls. The sheet comes off, sending a puff of dust into the air, and she coughs a bit.

"You alright, miss?" she hears the voice from under the crack in the door, farther from her than she'd realized.

"I'm fine."

"Okay!"

Clarice looks into the windows of the car, her eyes narrowing as she squints to make out the interior through the reflection of her flashlight on the dark glass. She nearly jumps out of her skin when she catches sight of a figure in the front seat of the car. She doesn't make a sound, being too well trained for that, and instead reminds herself that it's not possible for there to be

a living person inside of this unit. Her eyes adjust after a moment, and she realizes that the figure in the car is not a body, but a plastic mannequin, finely dressed in a three piece suit. The head is long and irregularly shaped, covered by a sheet of pale pink fabric.

The estate manager had given her the keys to the car should she need them for her investigation, and Clarice pulls them quickly from her pocket, opening the car door and peering inside. It's clear that someone set this up intentionally, and she can't help but wonder if Graham knew it was here. He must have known. It reminds her that, disarming as he is, Will Graham is a killer, a man whose primary motivations will always be his own ends.

Perhaps Lecter had told him this was here.

She pushes those thoughts aside for later, and reaches for the sheet over the hood, wrapping her fingers in a small handkerchief so as to avoid leaving prints. She pulls it off. Beneath the sheet is a cylindrical glass tank, much of the liquid which once filled it has evaporated out, but it's not hard to figure out what it's purpose was. At the bottom of the tank, at a crooked angle, sits the head of a man, bloated by preservation. It's eyes, white and bulging, stare at her, and Clarice shudders.

She'll have to call this in.

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